

STUDY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

for

TRANSFORMING THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM: DESIGNS FOR A WORKABLE WORLD

by

Joseph E. Schwartzberg
Director Emeritus, The Workable World Trust

and

Nancy J. Dunlavy
Director, The Workable World Trust



The Workable World Trust
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Unit 12: Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding and Disarmament (p. 225-271)

Editors' note: As this Unit relates to a very long, diverse and important chapter, discussion groups would probably benefit from taking it up in two meetings.

Why Is This Important? (p. 225-226)

Security – “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” – has been the principal preoccupation of the United Nations since its inception. Yet more than 50 million persons – overwhelmingly civilians – have perished in, or as a direct result of, interstate and civil wars since the conclusion of the Second World War. Clearly, success in meeting the UN’s principal goal has been far from satisfactory. How best to maintain peace and, more recently, to *build* peace has been the source of intense, and sometimes acrimonious debate at the UN. Questions of war, peace and disarmament will undoubtedly remain salient in the years ahead. Many security reform proposals have been advanced; but the existence of two sets of rules, one for the P-5 and another for the rest of the planet, appears – incorrectly – to be an insurmountable hurdle. In this Unit, we consider several key innovations with the potential to substantially mitigate the UN’s frequent inability to take effective action when needed. One, already adopted (but still in need of refinement) is the principle of “The Responsibility to Protect” (R2P; see *text box at the end of this Unit*). Others proposed in the book are a United Nations Peace Corps (UNPC) and a United Nations Administrative Reserve Corps (UNARC).

Key Issues: Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (p. 226-243)

While there have undoubtedly been a number of outstanding successes in UN-authorized peacekeeping initiatives, there have also been numerous failures. We focus here mainly on the latter.

1. Though Article 33 of the UN Charter outlines a broad range of non-military methods for dealing with threats to the peace, there has been inadequate resort to their use, thereby leaving the problems to fester or deteriorate into violent conflict.
2. The number of significant conflicts in the world far exceeds the capacity of current regional and UN mechanisms to deal with them.

3. Conflict resolution through the intervention of regional organizations has also been far from adequate.
4. Devising SC resolutions to authorize peacekeeping operations (PKOs) is often thwarted by global or regional geopolitical considerations.
5. PKOs authorized by the SC are seldom adequately funded, and member nations have been slow to provide personnel required for the mission.
6. The mandates of authorized missions are often insufficiently clear, and exit strategies are left unstated or are never formulated at all.
7. The general UN rule requiring PKO neutrality has enabled the commission of atrocities (e.g., as in Srebrenica) by one or more disputing parties.
8. There has been a marked shift in the countries providing military personnel (especially after the failure of the American-led missions to Somalia in 1991-95). Peacekeepers are now overwhelmingly provided by countries from the global South, and many of them are poorly trained and equipped.
9. Criminal activities (including arms sales and grave sexual offenses) by peacekeeping forces have become increasingly common.
10. Attempts by countries of the global North to establish elite standby rapid deployment brigades for use in support of the UN have been inadequately supported; and nations contributing to such efforts have reserved their sovereign prerogative of withdrawing from missions when they see fit to do so.
11. Funding and other forms of support for the Peacebuilding Commission, established in 2005, has been especially meager.
12. The initial application of military force in Libya under the R2P principle went far beyond the mandate established for it by the SC and has had catastrophic and persisting consequences.
13. SC failure to apply the R2P doctrine in many areas other than Libya has led to accusations of applying double standards, thereby tarnishing the SC's already unfavorable image.

The UN's frequent inability or unwillingness to respond satisfactorily to threats to the peace has (since 1990) led to numerous military operations that are not under UN control. In particular, the United States has increasingly assumed the role of world policeman, expending staggering sums on military forays into countries presumed to pose threats to either America or its allies. Its proclaimed "global war on terrorism" has led to the devastation of both Afghanistan and Iraq and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. Distrust of the motives of the US and its allies is widespread and deep.

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Article 33 of the UN Charter states that parties to disputes, within or among nations, should seek solutions by “negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements...” Why has this admonition been so often ignored? What might improve the likelihood of utilizing these diplomatic methods?**
- 2. The book discusses the pros and cons of using sanctions (p. 228). When, in your view, are sanctions warranted and in what form? Are there bad as well as good sanctions, and, if so, what distinguishes them?**

Possible Solutions: Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding

A continuing challenge is the multiplicity of civil or regional conflicts raging simultaneously (Issues #2 and 13 above). Some system for prioritizing UN involvement is needed. Both short-term and long-term reforms are needed.

In the short-term, the UN must increasingly resort to proactive diplomacy, place greater reliance on regional bodies as peace-promoting intermediaries, and judiciously apply targeted sanctions when UN and regional efforts are rebuffed. When none of these peaceful measures suffice, the P-5 powers must refrain from use of the veto when confronted with serious breaches of international law (genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity).

Greater use and more even-handed use should be made of the R2P principle, and the caveats to prevent its misapplication (p.238) must be observed.

Allowing reasonable time for transitional arrangements (p.251-252 and 254-256), two key agencies are envisaged: a) a United Nations Peace Corps (UNPC), and b) a United Nations Administrative Reserve Corps (UNARC). These are detailed below.

a) UN Peace Corps (p. 243-252):

- **An *all-volunteer, elite force* open to qualified (and well-vetted) men and women worldwide.**

- **A force *under the direct command of the United Nations*, precluding the possibility of individual nations withdrawing their troops.**
- **A standing force sufficiently large to cope, *on short notice*, with most foreseeable threats to the peace.**
- **A force stationed at multiple bases in willing countries in three regional commands and functioning in the languages (English, French and Spanish) most practical for the region in question.**
- **In addition to basic training (including negotiating skills and cultural sensitivity), specialized training useful for both military and post-service activities will be imparted during the period of UNPC service.**
- **Forces will be lightly, but well, equipped, sufficiently to maintain order, but not to engage in large offensive operations.**
- **Until the UNPC has its own capability, essential logistic support would be provided, on lease, from capable nations.**
- **UNPC personnel will be fully engaged in *peacebuilding* activities in host countries during periods when they are not militarily deployed. (*Strategically, peacebuilding is a more important goal than peacekeeping.*)**
- **Limited terms of service would preclude the emergence of a large military class and would increase the total number of young men and women benefitting from UNPC service.**
- **Upon receiving a formal emergency appeal from a simple majority of SC members (whether or not that majority included all P-5 members), the Secretary-General would be authorized to initiate rapid deployment of a limited force – say up to 10,000 troops – for a period not to exceed six months. This recommended emergency provision would enable the UN to give long overdue credence to the R2P principle. Maintaining a UNPC force authorized by the SG beyond the initial period of deployment would require authorization by the SC.**

The costs of establishing and maintaining the proposed UNPC would substantially exceed those of all current UN peacekeeping operations. While these costs may at first appear prohibitive, they pale in comparison to the world's national military outlays. One should also compare the likely UNPC costs to the vastly greater expenses for wars it could avert, not merely the costs of military operations but also the incalculable costs of lives lost, property destroyed, and massive environmental degradation. Additionally, many benefits would flow from the UNPC's non-military functions. The global community needs to liberate itself from its penny-wise, pound-foolish mode of response to looming threats of violence.

b) UN Administrative Reserve Corps (p. 252-56):

Experience indicates that the endemic problems that initially resulted in the need for a given PKO frequently lead to recurrence of fighting or threats to the peace soon after UN forces are withdrawn. Weakness of the local administrative infrastructure is a major cause of these breakdowns. A competent UNARC could greatly mitigate the problem.

UNARC would have the following characteristics:

- Its staff would be comprised mainly of highly capable, mid-career male and female volunteers from the global South.
- Recruitment and management of the volunteers would be based on memoranda of understanding between the UN Secretariat and the countries from which the volunteers came. Individual enlistments would be of not less than ten-years duration.
- UNARC staff would serve as a *reserve corps* of specially trained civil servants, available on *short notice*, to assume management of necessary administrative tasks in areas where PKOs were underway or recently concluded and in which the administrative infrastructure had broken down.
- Training of UNARC staff would take place at a UN Administrative Academy over a period of several years, and would include a basic core curriculum, courses in specific administrative functions, and deep immersion into the history, language and culture of specific world regions where PKOs are likely to be needed. They would also obtain specialized expertise in fields such as finance, personnel management, law, police administration, sanitation and public health, communications technology and so forth.
- In the field, UNARC staff would work under the direction of the local PKO. Their function would be to train their successors, thereby working themselves out of a job as quickly as possible.
- Volunteers would be encouraged to take refresher courses from time to time to maintain and improve their skills.

QUESTIONS:

1. *Review the book's suggestions (p. 227-8) on the need to prioritize and proactively resolve the many significant global conflicts raging simultaneously throughout the world. How might such new policies best be presented and implemented?*

- 2. Can a peacekeeping / peacebuilding force comprised of volunteers from throughout the world be made functional? (Consider the French Foreign Legion and other historical examples.)**
- 3. Can the UN itself be trusted to provide the skilled and cohesive leadership to bring about globally legitimate resolutions to local conflicts where different world powers back opposing sides?**
- 4. Even with the suggested total force of 300,000 the UNPC would be incapable of stopping an armed conflict between any two major world powers. Yet – perhaps because of the fear of MAD (mutually assured destruction) or other inevitable damage from powerful “conventional” weapons – there has been no war between two or more major powers since the Chinese and American confrontation in Korea. In light of these facts, do you believe it would still be worthwhile to create a UNPC?**
- 5. The costs of implementing and maintaining a UNPC would be substantial, far exceeding current UN peacekeeping budgets. Are you convinced by the cost/benefit ratio arguments presented in the book (p. 248-51)? How might the expected resistance from the military-industrial complex be overcome?**
- 6. What are the pros and cons of establishing UNARC? What significant advantages do you see, even if most UNARC volunteers are never called to active duty?**

Key Issue: Arms Control and Disarmament (p. 256-60)

Our planet has lived with the specter of nuclear war since 1945. We have gone through periods when the threat of war was particularly high (e.g., the Cuban missile crisis of 1962), and have seen the number of nuclear powers increase from one to nine. As a result, most people today have become so inured to a threat they feel powerless to contain that their prevailing response is one of denial. The same holds true in regard to other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), especially biological weapons. Nevertheless, intermittent bilateral and multi-lateral negotiations aimed at controlling nuclear arms and other WMD have been numerous. These began with the US's Baruch Plan of 1946 to put all nuclear weapons and technology under the control of the then newly created UN Atomic Energy Commission. However, the proposal was scuttled by the USSR because of the proposed insistence on external inspection, which would have violated Soviet sovereignty. In 1961, an even more comprehensive set of

accords was worked out by John McCloy (US) and Valerian Zorin (USSR), only to be rejected by mistrustful hawks in both Cold War camps. Arguably, the most important nuclear pact is the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; but four of the nine current nuclear powers (India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea) have refused to sign. The threat of nuclear catastrophe persists and may even be increasing.

Recommendation: Arms Control and Disarmament

The book advocates for the total abolition of WMDs (nuclear, biological and chemical) and the establishment of effective inspection regimes, largely based on the McCloy-Zorin accords and other recent proposals.

Failure to reach a workable agreement has little to do with the absence of an appropriate UN oversight agency. Rather, the basic problem is an absence of the requisite level of trust in a world still dominated by a tribal ethos. This may be derived from our biological inheritance, but aggressiveness has been sublimated in a number of peace-loving countries and communities.

Still, there is worldwide, popular and governmental support for nuclear disarmament. NGO networks maintain their efforts for reform. In respect to biological and chemical warfare, noteworthy accords have been reached and generally honored. Civil society has been effective in promoting support for a treaty outlawing anti-personnel mines (a treaty not signed, however, by the US, Russia, China and India). These advances should give us reason for hope. Civil society can and should continue to work collectively to outlaw WMDs in general.

Key Issue: Terrorism (p. 260-263)

Terrorism has emerged as a major global issue since the traumatic events of 9/11/2001. While it continues to be addressed mainly at the national level, it has also become a significant concern to various parts of the UN system. One must, however, recognize a fundamental paradox, that one side's "terrorist" is often the other side's "freedom fighter."

Recommendations: Terrorism

1. Adoption of a more deliberative approach in confronting terrorism, with greater international and interregional cooperation and greater use of INTERPOL (the International Criminal Police Organization).

2. Greatly increased efforts to address the root conditions of injustice that create and sustain terrorist networks.

QUESTIONS:

This chapter indicates that civil society organizations have been most effective in advancing nuclear/WMD disarmament efforts.

1. *What NGOs are you aware of that are working on these issues? What are their stances and current campaigns?*
2. *In today's current political climate, what do you anticipate in regard to the success of nuclear/WMD disarmament efforts? What actions and positions are most important at this time?*
3. *Low-probability events – including nuclear war – sooner or later do occur. If we do not eliminate or vastly reduce nuclear weapons, what do you suppose will be the life expectancy of our planet?*



Female soldiers, such as these women from Bangladesh, can play a major role in peacekeeping operations.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) (p. 238-240)

The following discussion relates to matters that were unfolding as the original English edition of the book went to press.

Mindful of the United Nations' failure to avert the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which approximately 800,000 innocent civilians perished in roughly three months, and recalling other genocidal behavior, such as the massacre of Bosnians at Srebrenica in 1991, the Canadian government established an International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), whose 2001 report first articulated the radical "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) principle. We highlight that principle here because – along with the creation of the International Criminal Court in 2002 (*Unit 7 of this Guide*) – it changes our understanding of national sovereignty, challenging the traditional view that governments may act with impunity and do whatever they wish within their national boundaries. Rather, R2P proclaims that sovereignty confers responsibility as well as rights, specifically the responsibility to protect a nation's population from egregious violation of their human rights. Further, it calls on the international community to assume that responsibility, possibly including the use of force, when a given government neither can nor will do so.

Following much debate, the R2P principle was included in the Outcome Document of the UNGA's 2005 summit meeting. But that document failed to include a set of ICISS caveats intended to prevent abuses in the name of R2P. Among those caveats were provisions that forceful intervention would be undertaken only: a) to prevent large scale loss of life or ethnic cleansing (rather than for other political motives), b) as a last resort (i.e., when diplomacy had failed), c) when it had reasonable prospects for success, and d) when the consequences would not be worse than those of inaction.

Although mentioned in several SC resolutions in the period 2006-2009, it was not until 2011, during the so-called "Arab Spring," that the R2P idea was put to its first major test. In that year, a popular uprising in Libya was severely suppressed by the then dictator, Muammar al-Qaddafi, and a credible threat existed of additional mass violence. In the absence of a UN force capable of reestablishing order, the SC entrusted the task to a US-led NATO coalition, which soon exceeded its mandate, deposing Qaddafi and violating most of the ICISS caveats. Aerial bombardment and ground fighting between pro- and anti-Qaddafi forces resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the exodus of between a fourth and a third of

Libya's population (overwhelmingly immigrant workers). The civil war – now involving numerous militias – continues in conditions of anarchy.

No R2P authorization of the use of force has occurred since the Libyan fiasco, despite the existence of numerous nations – most of them allied to the US – with repressive regimes comparable to that of Qaddafi. This has led to charges of the UN's employing a double standard and becoming a vehicle of neo-colonialism. The backlash is widespread, especially in the global South. Clearly, the well-intentioned R2P principle needs further work if it is to survive and protect those for whom it was designed.

QUESTIONS:

- 1. If it were in your power to decide, when would you deem it appropriate to intervene forcefully in another nations' problems?*
- 2. When, if ever, would it be appropriate for other nations to intervene, peacefully or otherwise, in the problems of your nation?*
- 3. How would you modify and strengthen the caveats intended to prevent abuse of the R2P principle and create conditions to ensure that abuses do not occur?*
- 4. Would the creation of a UN Peace Corps (UNPC), as proposed earlier in this Unit, help resolve some of the problems noted for R2P?*



Much of the UN's field activity provides humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons.